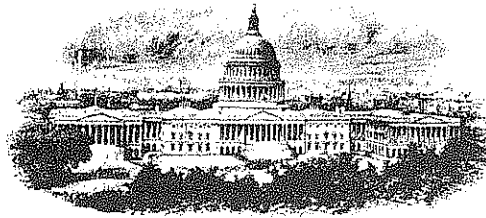


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COMMITTEE ON
RESOURCES

COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION

REPUBLICAN
POLICY COMMITTEE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

June 1, 2009

Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
US Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Gates:

As you continue your visits to Elmendorf Air Force Base and Ft. Greely I write to urge you to reconsider funding the construction of Missile Field Two and the fielding of the final fourteen Ground Based Interceptors at Ft. Greely, Alaska and to continue funding procurement of the F-22 Raptor until final publication of the next Mobility Capability Study and the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review.

We are sending the wrong message to our enemies by stopping the placement of these interceptors. North Korea continues to build its missile capabilities and is now able to launch a missile capable of hitting any place in the United States. As they showed by threatening to hold more nuclear and missile tests, North Korea's test of a two stage Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) on April 5th of this year was only the beginning. They have begun to restore their nuclear reactor, tested numerous short range missiles and a nuclear weapon and are preparing to test another ICBM. All of this has occurred since your announcement that we would not finish fielding the Ground Based Interceptors at Ft. Greely.

While thirty interceptors may be enough to counter the current threat from North Korea, it is clear that it will not be enough in the future and these interceptors will need to be fielded to ensure our ability to counter all missile threats from Rogue Nations. Before capping Missile Field Two, it is important that the realities of construction in the Interior of Alaska be taken into consideration. Due to the Arctic climate, permafrost and extreme temperatures, the construction season is significantly shorter in Alaska than it is in the Lower 48 States. Putting off construction now may not leave enough time to complete construction of Missile Field Two when it is needed.

Also, as you have seen at Elmendorf Air Force Base, the F-22 Raptor is and will continue to be an important platform for ensuring air dominance for our military. For that reason, I believe it is a mistake to cap the number of F-22s purchased by the Air Force at 187. Having seen the F-22 fighters stationed at Elmendorf Air Force Base, I believe the F-22 is the best fighter in the world now and will remain the best fighter for the next twenty years. It is the only 5th Generation fighter that has been fielded. And there are already situations in which a 4th

Generation fighter like the F-15 or F-16 would be unable to operate in due to sophisticated and lethal air defense systems like the SA-20 and S-300/400. Stopping production now, when the first F-35 squadrons won't be fully formed until 2013, will leave a critical vulnerability in the Air Force's ability to provide air dominance.

Of course, I understand that fighters with the capabilities of the F-22 are expensive, which is why it makes sense to field a fleet made up of both F-22s and the less expensive F-35s. Prior to lowering the number of F-22s due to the budget crunch caused by the Global War on Terror, the Air Force was going to purchase 381 F-22s and approximately 1,800 F-35s. While the F-35 does not have the capabilities of the F-22, it is still more than capable of forming the backbone of the fighter fleet with the help of the F-22. The F-22 is the advanced, clearing force and the F-35 is the holding force and their capabilities and procurement numbers reflect that. It is not an either/or situation—both planes are necessary for the Air Force to continue to control the skies.

Even with a proper mix, however, a fleet of 183 F-22s is not enough to deter or meet the potential threats facing our country. Once training, maintenance and tests are factored in to that number, it leaves only 100 fighters available. There have been over 30 air campaign studies over the last 15 years that showed a requirement for far more than 183 F-22s to replace a fleet of over 800 F-15s. And with so few F-22s, the planes will be used more often, they will age quickly and they will not be available for all of the missions which they could be used for. And since the production line will be shut down, the Air Force will have to choose between using planes that aren't as well suited for missions or restarting production at significant costs. That situation will, more likely than not, leave the United States in the same vulnerable position it is in now, with rapidly aging planes and an Air Force that is unable to establish air dominance with minimal loss of planes and people the way it has over the past 50 years.

Assuming that we will not face threats which will require the capabilities of the F-22 to meet is a dangerous decision that we will regret. By procuring 243 F-22s, the amount that most Air Force threat studies have shown to be necessary, we will ensure that we will not only have enough F-22s to meet all threats, but we will prevent threats from becoming reality by ensuring that many countries decide that fighting the United States is not worth the drastic losses our Air Force will inflict.

Thank you again for taking the time to come to Alaska and tour our military installations. The men and women that serve in Alaska are among the best in the world and I am proud to represent them in Congress. I hope you will continue to do everything in your power to provide them with the necessary equipment and support for them to continue to protect our country everyday and I look forward to working with you in the future to ensure our military remains the best the world has ever seen.

Sincerely,



DON YOUNG

Congressman For All Alaska